



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
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**Health, Education, and Human Services Committee considers new  
legislation allowing Navajo Technical College to be named a university**

WINDOW ROCK – The Health, Education, and Human Services Committee discussed Legislation No. 0154-13 last Wednesday, which aims to approve amendments to Title 15 of the Navajo Nation Code. The amendments will allow for NTC to change its name to Navajo Technical University and the authority to establish its own institutional review board.

Legislation No. 0154-13 serves an amended version of Legislation No. 0077-13, which was previously voted down by the Navajo Nation Council, during the Spring Session on April 16.

The original legislation aimed to approve amendments to Title 2 and Title 15 of the Navajo Nation Code, however the legislation's sponsor Council Delegate Danny Simpson (Becenti, Crownpoint, Huerfano, Lake Valley, Nageezi, Nahodishgish, Tse'ii'ahi, Whiterock), asked the Council to vote down the legislation to allow time to reintroduce new legislation that addressed their concerns.

Council Delegate Jonathan Hale (Oak Springs, St. Michaels) and the legislation's co-sponsor, said the legislation's primary purpose is to raise academic research standards on the Navajo Nation.

"The legislative documents are here for review and to approve Navajo Technical College's request to become a university," Delegate Hale said to his colleagues. "The proposed IRB is a necessity for the college to produce valuable research."

Dr. Elmer Guy, president of Navajo Technical College, urged the committee to approve the legislation and emphasized the college's accomplishment, mentioning NTC's six bachelor degree programs, which will soon increase to eight.

Dr. Guy added that the college is working to implement a masters program, the first to be offered on the Navajo Nation.

"Once we are at the masters level of research we are no longer a college, we will be a university," said Guy.

Delegate Hale addressed the second part of the legislation that seeks for NTC to establish its own IRB.

NTC has worked with the Navajo Division of Health and Department of Justice to clarify concerns over the proposed establishment of an IRB, said Delegate Hale.

“The college will only review and approve students’ research related to NTC’s academic programs,” said Delegate Hale. “Any medical research will continue to be reviewed by the Navajo Nation IRB.”

“Any and all research that can be done by our academic departments will be reviewed by the college,” added Dr. Guy.

Delegate Hale emphasized that Navajo Technical College has progressed and continues to encourage students to enhance their lives and to help Diné people through higher education.

Council Delegate Walter Phelps (Cameron, Coalmine Canyon, Leupp, Tolani Lake, Tsidi To ii) expressed his appreciation and support for the legislation as an effort to improve the quality of education on the Navajo Nation, but also questioned additional support from other Navajo Nation entities.

“I’m grateful you were able to work with the Department of Justice,” said Delegate Phelps. “Will the Department of Justice or Navajo Nation IRB be providing any kind of support for this legislation?”

In response, Dr. Guy explained that NTC has maintained frequent communication with the Navajo Division of Health and Navajo Nation Institutional Review Board.

“We have gained the support from Larry Curley, NDOH division director, and Beverly Becenti-Pigman, chairperson of the Navajo Nation Institutional Review Board,” said Guy. “We each believe this change is good for our children and students.”

At the conclusion of the discussion, HEHS members voted 3-0 to pass the legislation.

The legislation now moves forward to the Naabik’íyáti’ Committee for consideration.

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